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As far as I am aware, this simple method is not generally known or thought of; nevertheless I am inclined to the belief that it would become easy to most persons after a little practice, and it is certainly very convenient, and greatly enhances the pleasure of viewing the many fine engravings almost everywhere to be seen.

W. H. PRATT.

Davenport, Io., Dec. 14.

#### Laws against quacks.

I notice in your notes on the laws regulating the practice of medicine and surgery an omission to call attention to the fact that a bill (senate, 485) passed the senate last year, and would have passed the assembly but for the late date of its introduction, whereby it failed to be reached on the calendar. That bill embodied the points of agreement of those practitioners of medicine who have a legal status. It was based upon the bills introduced by the Medical society of the state of New York, so far as they were not concerned with the formation of a board of medical examiners. The State homoeopathic society has directed its legislative committee to favor this bill if again introduced, as it probably will be. I do not think that either of the judges you name would consider the construction of the registration law adopted by the Medical society of the county of New York as absurd; nor would they differ in opinion from the judges before whom that construction has been maintained.

You will admit, I think, — as frankly as you admitted that the society was justified in the prosecution that elicited your comments, — that it is reasonable to require registration of every physician in a county who regularly practises or resides therein. No registered physician has been prosecuted for a consultation or occasional act of practice in a county wherein he was not registered. But the bill in question specifically meets your criticism, and, if introduced again, will be made even clearer on this point. There is an opportunity at the next session of the legislature to codify the various acts restricting medical practice into a simple statute, and fair criticism of the bill in question will materially aid the purging of the statute-book of the present clumsy enactments.

W. A. PURRINGTON.

New York, Dec. 21.

#### The Panama canal.

The article with the above title, from the pen of M. de Lesseps, copied by you in Dec. 3 issue from *The Scottish geographical magazine* for November, contains some errors both of fact and of inference.

Commercially the needs for and uses of the canal are misstated and overestimated. Trade must follow certain routes, governed by the earth's form and dimensions, and by the winds that blow or do not blow. For fear of the calm belt in Gulf of Mexico, the captain of a big ship, loaded with guano or nitrate of soda, would rather face the gales off Cape Horn. Because of the 'trades,' sailing ships from India and Australia would still go home *via* Cape of Good Hope. I have yet to meet a captain who would not elect Cape of Good Hope rather than Panama if loaded at a port even as far east as Philippines. A sailing-ship bound from San Francisco to Liverpool would think twice before she paid any thing to be put into the calms in land-locked water off

Colon. Many captains have told me they would go on around the Cape Horn. Many cargoes are put on to sailing-ships, because they will be longer at sea than if sent per steam. It is no uncommon thing that a sailing-ship gets the same, and even more, freight than a steamer, because of the exigencies of the shipper or the condition of the market for merchandise. Hence the assumption that any of his '2' (p. 519), or that all of '1' or '3,' would seek Panama, is unfounded. A fair estimate, granting the correctness of his figures, would throw out '2,' and halve '1' and '3,' and leave, say, rising 2,000,000 tons per annum. In the table of distances, same page, London to Sydney, Havre to Sydney, he conveniently forgets that that traffic would use Suez rather than Panama. I fancy it is not generally known that the entire traffic of Suez is steam. There has never been an American merchantman through Suez, nor a sailing-ship of any nationality. The few sailors that have passed through were towed not only through Suez, but the entire distance to and from port of departure (Bombay) and destination (Malta). Practically the entire traffic on Suez is steam.

But M. de Lesseps does not refer to the most important factor in the problem. The evolution of the marine engine is still progressing. Steamers of moderate size and speed already approximate the expenses of sailors, not counting the further saving in interest on plant by reason of more frequent 'turns,' i.e., though a steamer may cost more than sailor, the former makes more voyages in a year, i.e., earns more freights. Before the Panama canal is finished, I doubt not such progress will have been made in compounding engines and in expansion of steam, that few new sailors will thereafter be built. The carrying-trade of the world will be done by steamers, just as the passenger trade has passed into their hands. Soon, as nations reckon life, sail will be limited to cruising for pleasure, fish or whale, or scientific research: even these will have steam power to go and come to place of resort. This change might and probably would throw the traffic of west coast America with east coast America and Europe into Panama canal; but Australia and India with Europe and America, never.

FRANK GOODWIN.

Framingham, Mass., Dec. 13.

#### What was the rose of Sharon?

In *Science* for May 14 (vii. No. 171) is an article headed 'What was the rose of Sharon?' Though not familiar with either former or recent discussions of the question, I am interested in recalling an observation of my own while riding over the plain of Sharon on the road from Jaffa to Ramleh. It was about the middle of the afternoon, Feb. 18, 1859. The dark soil was for a considerable distance half covered with broad patches of bright red flowers. 'Roses of Sharon!' some one exclaimed. I forget whether it was the United States consul from Beirut or some one else of our party. As my impression now is, several persons who were likely to know concurred in saying that these flowers were commonly so called in that region. The flower which I gathered and pressed was afterwards identified by an American scholar as *Anemone coronaria* of Sibthorp's 'Flora Graeca.' The color of the dried petals is now a dark maroon.

FISK P. BREWER.

Grinnell, Io., Dec. 18.